564 engage only in agriculture. Furthermore, casual or temporary practice, in one's own home, for instance, of one of the reputedly menial trades is not considered degrading.

567 Theoretically, enslavement does not exclude an individual from his own community nor in any way demean him in
596 relation to it (1); if he returns, he recovers his rights just as
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1. For example, Dêssé-Koro, taken in captivity to Ségou, returned to Kaarta where he exercised the faya of the Massa-si.

though he had never been away.

On the other hand, at the place where he is a slave, an individual belongs to no community (as a person), and that is why he has no rights and is treated as a chattel.

567 We have shown earlier how, aided by time and circumstances, a slave may manage to escape some of the limitations of his status, but strictly speaking, [222] he can never escape this status. If in fact, as the chronicle says of Ngolo Dyara, a slave succeeds in attaining a position whose importance would seem to obliterate the stigma of servitude, the blemish of slavery nevertheless remains indelible.

4. Relations between Communities

596 The true social unit is the community. Even when no
614 special organization links them, communities are often linked
● 621 by numerous bonds. This involves no distinction by race, incidentally, since more often than not ethnically diverse peoples live together in the same region.

These bonds between communities may be classified under two heads: kinship and alliance.

Kinship

[602] The influence of kinship is very extensive. Thus, a single patriarchal community includes the familial communities

596 of all the male members of the community, and agnate and
614 uterine communities coexist in each familial community.
621 Furthermore, every familial community automatically becomes
602 a patriarchal community upon the death of its head, and it is then composed of its own familial communities.

What actually happens, then, is that under the original patriarchal community are grouped an ever increasing number of other patriarchies or families, each of which includes its agnate or uterine communities. When the original patriarchy is an old one, it is obvious that a large number of persons will be living under its aegis, all of whom have dyamu and tne in common.

It may happen, however, that through time and a variety of circumstances branches become separated from the trunk, and to mark their new status, to perpetuate the memorable achievement of their founder, some of these groups have adopted a special dyamu and particular tne. At first the new dyamu is simply added to the original one, but later on the new one comes to be the only one used. However that may be, the principal characteristics [223] of the original community still persist, with a few new traits merely superimposed.

Since every secondary community in turn generates like communities, it goes without saying that the communities most distant from the original one have only a few traits in common with it, but their kinship never becomes extinct.

What are the effects of this kinship? On the one hand, it requires all concerned to observe their common duties to the community: in particular to respect ancestral traditions relative to the cult; to give mutual aid; to recognize the authority of the current fa who, for his part, is obliged to protect all his relatives, no matter how remote the connection.

As far as outsiders are concerned, kinship requires everyone to respect all pacts between communities. One can often observe fidelity to these alliances which may be hundreds of years old. If by chance people who have previously never seen each other learn of their respective dyamu and the attendant obligations, they will at once assume the reciprocal obligations contracted by their ancestors.

Alliance

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The types of alliance between communities appear to differ widely, but in actual fact all alliances are based on a religious or magic rite and, more generally, on an oath.

Four forms of alliance particularly deserve attention: the tne or interdict, the oath, marriage, and the common cult.

I. The tne. The native regards the invisible world as a duplicate of the visible world, complete with communities. He carries the analogy even to those things which we call inanimate objects. That is why, when a native binds himself to an interdict, he is not promising to respect such and such a person or thing but, rather, the community of which he believes the person or thing to be a representative. Besides, just as the interdict applies to the whole community to which the object of the interdict belongs, it also binds all the members of the community whose fa instituted it. [224]

The basis of the alliance is the oath of the fa, any infraction of which automatically brings the most dreadful calamities upon the guilty party. It is like a sacrament, which the descendants of the fa must respect in infinitum.

The chronicle of Ségou shows us how such an oath happens to be made. Upon reaching the Niger, and having no means of crossing it, Ntchi in his peril called upon his ancestors for help. His prayer was answered: a poyon' appeared and ferried him and his people to the opposite shore. In gratitude for this service, Ntchi swore that the fish would henceforth be sacred to him and to his descendants. By this act, all poyon' became tne for Ntchi and his descendants, although this does not mean that there was a cult of the fish. It was a kind of alliance or covenant, analogous to one between human communities and with similar effects; it entailed some sort of reciprocal brotherly mutual aid. In practice, a Kouloubali descended from Ntchi must never, under any circumstances whatsoever, voluntarily harm a poyon', his tne, on pain of the most disastrous consequences. If he has done so inadvertently, he can atone with sacrifices or appropriate penance, which his own intuition or a diviner suggests. He must always, in so far as the need arises,

596 assist his tne, while showing it the greatest respect. The mystical basis of this alliance sometimes causes the native to behave in a particular way toward his tne: he will not look straight at it; he will not touch it, unless absolutely forced to do so, and then he will apologize and ask forgiveness.

Anything may be the object of a tne, but there is probably not a single Bambara family which does not have some animal as tne. Expressions which the natives in general and the Bambara in particular use to make foreigners understand their relations with this animal tne have made many Europeans think that the native regards the animal as a relative in the literal sense of the word. This is not the case, as we have just seen, and consequently Bambara totem is a purely European invention (1). [225]

1. It should be understood that the tne has many sources besides one mentioned here, which is the only one pertinent to this chapter. Thus, Bala refused to pronounce any word having the syllable da (p.); Sounsan abstained from the kulé (p. , footnote 1).

596 II. The oath. In native society, a man who is ambitious or merely anxious to establish a powerful community can do so only with the support of faithful allies. Massa and Biton not only succeeded in dominating their young companions, but they also bound them closely through the oath and the cult.

Undoubtedly all the founders of powerful communities have not proceeded in exactly the same way, but all of them have employed analogous methods. An isolated individual can accomplish nothing in this social milieu where everything rests on these strongly organized collectivities, the communities. Any Bambara eager for well-being and peace will seek out and attach himself to a "powerful protector" (dyigi seme) capable of providing him with this security, even if it means the loss of his own

596 freedom. That is why any important fa is invariably surrounded
614 by a small group of intimates who are bound to his fate, often
●621 by a reciprocal agreement based on an oath.
608 One of these sacramental alliances is particularly solemn; its purpose is to create a kind of kinship analogous to that which links blood brothers. There is always a profound difference between natural and contractual brotherhood, since the former exists and produces its effects independently of the will of those involved, whereas the latter exists and is valid only within the limits agreed upon by the contracting parties (1).

1. It should be noted that fraternization in its symbolic form has a necessary consequence which is not obligatory for other types of alliance by oath: it obligates the descendants of the contracting parties just as much as those undertaking the contract.

For a pact of brotherhood (dyonge) (2), the contracting

2. This term unquestionably derives from the verb siri, "to link, to unite."

parties, whether two or several, proceed as they see fit, either in public or privately in the presence of only close relatives and intimates. Each party to the agreement pricks his forearm and extracts a few drops of blood. The blood thus obtained is mixed with a small quantity of goat's milk in a receptacle. Calling upon the ancestors or some god chosen for the occasion to bear witness, each party in turn promises with a solemn oath to consider the others as his brothers. At the same time, he repeats the [226] conditions of the pact and finally sips some of the liquid.

This is the closest alliance that two Bombara can contract (1). Among other things, it forbids one to marry women

1. Blood-brotherhood was contracted

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between Deni-ba Bo for the Massa-si of Kaarta and Suleyman Ba for the people of Fouta.

belonging to the other's community, at least virgins or women reputed to be such. This is because a first sexual contact is likely to result in some flow of blood, and brotherhood imposes a terrible punishment on anyone who sheds the blood of a blood-brother or one of his people. As is apparent, the obligation undertaken by the contracting parties holds for all their descendants, regardless of sex and in infinitum. Henceforth there is a very close solidarity between the two communities, who are so bound to mutual aid that, in practice, anything (including lies, slander, and perjury) is permissible to overcome a common enemy or, in any event, to help the ally in trouble.

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In place of the brotherhood oath, many other forms of oath can be used. Thus, the chronicles tell of Sounsan and Fa Siné forming an alliance with an oath which was undoubtedly binding, because the anvil on which it was sworn was afterwards cast into a well. Nko, Sounsan's god, received the oath under which the "young men" who were Massa's companions allied themselves to the latter's fate. At Ségou, the tondyon' likewise swore loyalty on the idols.

These sacramental agreements are endlessly varied, but they bind the parties only under the stipulated conditions, especially as regards the respective communities of the fa who take the oath.

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III. Marriage. There is no better way for a Bambara to show his attachment to someone whose alliance or friendship he desires than by giving him as a wife one of the girls of his own community and providing her with a generous dowry. This is one of the most solemn forms of alliance between communities (2).

2. People united by marriage are called furu-nyuan' (spouses) and biran' (allies).

596 This conjugal union differs clearly from [227] ordinary
614 forms of marriage. In view of the fact that the husband gets a
621 wife without paying a bride price for her, the wife is not given
583 in usufruct, and therefore she must be treated with the greatest consideration or she may be taken back. The situation can only be normalized if the husband is rich enough to present to the donor a gift equal to or preferably, if possible, greater than the dowry brought by the wife, or he may give a similar gift to the wife (1).

1. Such property is the wife's paraphernalia.

In these situations also, the procedure varies a great deal. The donor may offer a girl from another community and provide her with a dowry. This is what Biton did in order to bind Ngolo to him: Biton gave him a girl designated by the marabouts as one of the elect, and he also provided the girl with a rich dowry.

The significance of such alliances can be estimated only when one has some knowledge of the intentions of the parties involved, especially those of the donor. We shall see one important type in the chapter on Islam, the marriage of Allah.

IV. The common cult (2). The territorial community.

311 2. Communities may be united under the
621 protection of the same god. Here we shall
776 study only their union under the protection
794 of the "genie, master of the earth" (nyana dugu-da-siri). Other common cults will be studied in the following chapter, "Brotherhoods."

In the mind of the Bambara, the earth, together with everything in it, is the property of the spirits. As a result, no one may make use of it or presume to settle on or cultivate an unused field without first going through certain ceremonies.

For this purpose, either on his own responsibility or, more often, with the aid of "the one who knows" (don-na-ba), a

311 Bambara seeks the "genie, master of the earth" (nyana dugu-da-
621 siri) or, more exactly, determines where this genie dwells. It
776 may be a spring, a hill, or a rock; often it is a fine tree, in-
794 variably surrounded by a grove or at least with a grove nearby. Then, always following the same procedure, he finds out the conditions under which the genie will allow someone to settle in his domain in order to live there and cultivate the lands. Thus, a contract is worked out which governs the man's exploitation of the genie's territorial domain. As a result, provided he worships the genie in the manner required, the man [228] will be able to work under the protection of the god. Anyone who has had a share in the contract, even if only through representatives, will likewise profit if he scrupulously observes the conditions.

621 The establishment of a village requires the cooperation of
622 several communities, each represented by its fa. One of these fa
793 will either appropriate the leadership or be chosen as the rep-
794 resentative or chief of the others. Sometimes he may be merely primus inter pares; otherwise he may have managed to have his primacy conceded by the rest. It is this chief who treats with the genie in the name of the whole village; thus, he becomes the "high priest of the genie" (nyana-n-son-na-ba) with the essential function of "making the offerings" (son') required by the cult. Furthermore, he administers the earthly domain of the genie and is therefore called dugu-tigi (master of the earth).

To the nyana dugu-da-siri is usually attributed the same dyamu as that of its high priest, just as though the genie belonged to the spiritual family of the priest. This is a result consistent with the mentality of the Bambara.

The same mental state accounts for the custom in certain
621 villages of dedicating a living animal, often a ram, to the
776 nyana dugu-da-siri and believing it to be the god's mount. The
778 animal is allowed to wander freely about the village, and its
[825] mischief is never punished; indeed, the people enjoy caressing and indulging it. The animal takes on some of the attributes of the genie and is, as it were, endowed with certain supernatural virtues, so only good can come from contact with it.

621 Theoretically, each settlement has only one genie, but
776 actually it may have several, especially if it has been settled by

621 776 successive groups, each recognizing a genie-protector. In that case, the genie first recognized and worshiped takes precedence over the others. In any case, social life requires each segment to respect the gods of its neighbors, and this respect carries with it a certain amount of superstitious fear.

311 621 794 It is evident from the foregoing that occupying and cultivating land poses certain problems for the settlement benefited, and these may be grouped under three heads: the cult of the genie-protector; the exploitation of the land; and the organization of the territorial community.

793 794 The cult. This is mainly supported by the high priest, whose principal duty is to "make the offerings" (son') to the "genie" [229] (nyana), hence his title nyana-son-na-ba. He is assisted by the council of fa, one of whom, the syere (follower), may replace him in case of need. The office of high priest is for life and is inherited in the same way as his faya. This continuity shows that the genie is actually regarded as a kind of spiritual ancestor of the priest, as we have seen from the fact that it is given the same dyamu as its high priest.

794 796 The cult ceremonies are very simple. They consist of offerings made by the high priest, who at the same time indicates to the genie the purpose for which they are being made. The most solemn ceremonies take place when millet is sown and harvested. For these occasions, every worshiper is expected to bring a contribution in proportion to his resources. The kind of gift is not specified; everyone brings whatever he can or whatever he wishes, usually animals (sheep, beef, fowl, etc.), grain, and especially millet beer (dlo).

782 796 778 + During these general gatherings, from which no one is excluded, only the high priest and the members of the council enter the sacred grove or approach the genie's abode. There, the high priest makes known the purpose of the sacrifice: to thank the genie for his past favors; to offer him the gifts brought by everyone; and to ask him to continue to protect the community so that its prosperity may be assured. Then the victims are sacrificed, and their blood is sprinkled on the tree trunk or whatever object or place is reputed to be the home of the genie.

genie. The same is done with libations of dlo or the juice of kola nuts. Since anything offered to the genie is supposed to be consumed on the spot, an orgy lasting for several days usually follows.

In addition to these two great obligatory ceremonies especially concerned with the exploitation of the land, the god's protection is sought by similar, but much simplified means in all affairs whether they concern the entire settlement (wars, disasters), a particular patriarchal or familial community, or even a single individual. Through the high priest as intermediary, the offering and the request are made for the purpose indicated by the petitioner, who often promises to make a further gift to the genie when his wish has been granted. Vows of this type are made very frequently.

The cult of his high [230] priests and of all the important men of the settlement is tied in with the cult of the genie, obviously a consequence of the fact that the genie is the spiritual patron of the community which honors him; its members are his children and with him form what amounts to a family. So, in line with what happens in a patriarchal or familial community, the territorial community also holds an annual festival for the dead, during which special honor is paid to noted personages, among whom deceased high priests have first place.

Exploitation of the land. The high priest in charge of the cult likewise regulates everything concerning the exploitation of the terrestrial domain of the genie, and in this capacity he is known as the dugu-tigi (1), master of the earth. In this

1. In line with common practice, I shall henceforth use this title to designate both capacities, the high priest and the master of the earth.

office he has the help of the council of fa, and in important matters he must follow their advice.

With the help of this council, he allots the land when

311 the community is founded. His permission is required before
621 anyone may build a dwelling in the portion reserved as the seat
423 of the community; the village is therefore kept within precise
793 limits. In practice, however, everyone builds wherever he pleases if there is no objection. If there is an objection, the dispute is settled by the dugu-tigi and his council.

423 Outside the village proper, the terrain includes fields
621 which, either at the start or during the course of settlement, are allotted in perpetuity to the various fa of the community by the dugu-tigi in council. Each fa and his dependents have indefinite use of the same fields, although by law the authority which assigned them may take them away without being required to justify the act. This use is a kind of usufruct that is more extensive than that of our law, since the beneficiary may
[425] use the land without restriction, except that he may not alienate it. The tenant, however, may not use the land in any way that might be prejudicial to the community as a whole without the consent of the dugu-tigi and council. For example, such would be the case if he proposed to give his right of use to an outsider.

Any land not specifically allotted [231] and anything it produces or contains belongs, theoretically, to the member of the community who cultivates it. Certain fruits or produce, however, are sometimes reserved for the community as a whole: the leaves or fruit of the baobab, karite, nété, tamarind trees, etc.; the fish in certain ponds, watercourses, fluvial zones,
[476] etc.; the game in certain cantons, etc. On the dates set for these collective enterprises by the dugu-tigi and his council, the people proceed in a body to gather fruit, harvest the crop, fish, or hunt. Sometimes each person is allowed to keep what he has gathered; sometimes all the proceeds are collected for the dugu-tigi to distribute according to custom. There are also special regulations governing the extraction of matter or materials from the ground.

621 Organization of the territorial community. The duties
622 of the dugu-tigi and his council are not limited to directing the cult and regulating the use of land. Anything that happens within the territorial community concerns the nyana-dugu-da-siri, because the members of the community are his children

621 622 (den'). Proof of this is seen in the fact that any important happening in a native's life is supposed to be reported to the dugu-tigi and in certain cases requires an offering or, as it is called, homage (bunya). We have seen this in the case of birth, giving a name, circumcision, marriage, and death. It is no less essential in cases of public disaster (epidemic, persistent drought, invasion, war).

621 622 692 In theory, the dugu-tigi does not intervene of his own accord in the private affairs of the patriarchal or familial communities which, when taken together, constitute the territorial unit we usually call a village (1). When a quarrel between rela-

> 1. The territorial community among the Bambara is called dugu, a term which at the same time means "land" and "among," "to," "within," etc., and which is preceded by a name recalling some circumstance involved with the founding of the village.

tives cannot be settled by the fa concerned, however, he asks for the intervention of the dugu-tigi and his council. If dissension arises between the people of different communities, the same arbitration is usually requested. As a result, a kind of tribunal of conciliation has evolved, which can only suggest what the parties should do or refrain from doing in order to put an end to the dispute. Theoretically, the dugu-tigi has no right to enforce the [232] verdict (1), because the communities are

> 1. That is why litigation may be indefinitely prolonged.

extremely jealous of their independence. As a consequence, they yield only to the extent that is in their best interests.

It may happen, however, that the dugu-tigi, supported by his council, does exert authority when he has the power and is seconded by notables who make common cause with him for

621 622 692 various reasons. Thus, the dugu-tigi in council can invoke police powers to maintain order in the community and even act as a tribunal to punish those whose misdeeds in any way endanger the persons or property of members of the community.

621 622 [735] Since the genie is expected to ensure the prosperity of the faithful, it is the duty of the dugu-tigi to come to the assistance of members of the community who are unfortunate or indigent.

He must also maintain the relations of his community with the outside world, that is, with neighboring territorial communities and all other groupings, analogous or otherwise. He can act independently only in matters which we call purely administrative; for other matters he must have the assent of the council of fa, above all for any matter involving the disposal of community property.

621 622 651 It is obvious that all the roles of the dugu-tigi involve expenses that are often considerable, but for this purpose he has access to goods from many sources. In the first place, offerings made to the nyana are of various kinds; they are not always consumable, and even if they are, they are usually consumed only in part. The remainder belongs to the dugu-tigi. It is customary to give bunya (gifts of homage) to the dugu-tigi on many occasions: a hunt, a fishing expedition, millet harvest, etc.; to thank him for an allotment of land, or for some other service. Community property is farmed out for fees payable at fixed times, and tribute is paid in the same way. Most of the various kinds of infractions committed within the community are punished by fines received by the dugu-tigi. Incorrigible malefactors become slaves of the community, and the produce of their labors [233] goes to the dugu-tigi. Anything found abandoned on land belonging to the community is turned over to the dugu-tigi, in whole or in part.

In case of need arising through some exceptional emergency (war, an expedition, public works of various kinds, etc.), the dugu-tigi may have recourse to what we should call an emergency assessment, i.e., he may ask the members of the community for special contributions for the purpose.

621 622 651 652 These are the principal resources of the community treasury, which is held and administered by the dugu-tigi with the help and under the control of the fa. The dugu-tigi may use the treasury to help him perform his duties honorably, to assist unfortunate or indigent members of the community, to receive the guests of the community in a suitable manner, and to meet emergencies.

[661] Under no circumstances does this treasury constitute any part of the personal fortune of the dugu-tigi. Only usurpation, which is fairly common under various guises, alters this state of affairs. In the same way, it is not uncommon for this wealth to be divided in some measure among the members of the council, who in one way or another appropriate it. Such abuses, no matter how common, do not in the least alter the principle that legally such wealth is and remains exclusively the property of the community. [234]

Chapter 4

Brotherhoods

1. The End of Childhood

794 881 General considerations. The cult of the ancestors and of the nyana dugu-da-siri are not enough for the Bambara in his efforts to make sure of the protection, help, and services of the invisible world. The magician has created for him some renowned protectors or servitors which are powerful and formidable: the nyana of the boli.

The cult of these gods gives rise to spiritual families whose members are so closely linked by the bonds of fraternity that we may safely say that these groupings are brotherhoods. All these brotherhoods share the common characteristic that no one can be received into them before having submitted to a certain rite called soli (1) or bolo-ko (1), terms which

1. Soli is the word for the action of piercing, emerging, laying an egg, or

794 clergy. On the other hand, an innocent man will be over-
696 whelmed by mental and physical torture if he is unable to give his executioners what they demand.

681 Corporal punishment includes flogging, chains, starvation, torture, and death by all imaginable methods. Pecuniary punishment includes fines, confiscation, and pillage. The condemned man is also sometimes forced to labor for the clergy or is even enslaved by them.

Social and Political Role of the Brotherhoods

794 By its actions, the brotherhood, an artificial family,
776 tends to take the place of the natural family whose organization
769 it has borrowed and whose cult it has banished. It is easy to account for this.

The cult of the manes is the framework of the family and of the communities derived from it. The brotherhood has cleverly managed to set up such a cult by specially honoring the manes of its high priests, its famous members, and its eminent worshipers. [267]

Gradually, the nyana dugu-da-siri, protector of the territorial community, has given way to the nyana of the boli, a more powerful god since his territory is unlimited.

It is true that in spite of everything the tradition remains, and even though they are largely over-shadowed by the nyana of the boli, the manes of the ancestors and the nyana dugu-da-siri are still venerated. Though sowing and harvesting are celebrated
[731] with great pomp by the brotherhoods, still, when a disaster,
[782] epidemic, or terrible drought occurs, sacrifices are promptly offered to the manes and the gods of the place. People may fear their anger, but they also have confidence in their good will, and it is felt that their severity can always be tempered. On the other hand, the nyana of the boli are supposed to be basically evil, and their worship seems intended to ward off their malignity rather than to obtain their favor.

794 This duality in religion brings about extremely compli-
● 621 cated interrelationships which bind the communities and

794 brotherhoods together, although the latter seem to dominate the
●621 former. These brotherhoods hem in the communities they dominate by abusively extending their jurisdiction far beyond its proper limits. Indeed, the faithful are not the only ones who are subject to the judgments handed down by the brotherhoods, whose clergy make decisions affecting not only members involved but often also third parties in the neighborhood or even people from neighboring or distant regions. The brotherhoods are tyrannical toward their own members and no less so to strangers, who often see no way of escaping persecution short of asking to be received into the ranks.

794 Thus, it is apparent how a brotherhood increases in size
661 and in power as time passes. Each year it takes in the young
182 people at the end of the soli, and as a result all the communities are at length absorbed by it live in it and for it (1). It

1. The following is a typical example.

[778] In the village of Marenna (Fouladougou Arbala), the natives belong to the cult of Ba-ku. This boli consists of a small sheaf of roots of the indigo tree. For every newborn child the nyana-tigi makes and consecrates a small Ba-ku, which he places in a gourd and puts in the temple of this nyana. At the time of the soli, the child becomes affiliated with the cult, takes the boli placed in the gourd for him at birth and henceforth wears it on his person. All the families in Marenna are thus closely involved in the cult of Ba-ku, being, as it were, engendered by this god to whom each person owes both physical and spiritual birth. Ba-ku comes from Sangaran, and his high priest is a Dyara; that is why he is invoked and called by the expression Ba-ku Dyara Sangaran-ka. The word ba-ku literally means "tail of a

631 Bambara, with whom we are here concerned. Each writer, however, uses these terms to refer to an ill-defined type of authority, sometimes without even attempting a critical comparison with similar institutions in our own countries.

This uncertainty is accompanied by other such doubtful similarities, which result in confused conceptions. Is it not common to speak of feudalism, of a feudal system, to describe the kind of hierarchy among various native chiefs? In the Sudan, however, there is no connection between man and the land comparable to that which was the basis of the feudal system. Indeed, no such meaning is possible, since the Sudanese does not recognize any right of ownership of land. Therefore, political ties between native chiefs are never based on land; how then can one speak of a feudal system?

614 As a matter of fact, the social unit is the community based on the family; it develops into a patriarchy and expands into a tribe and a people. Its members are united by blood ties, which are confirmed by the ancestor cult. [288]

Since they are proud and jealous of their freedom, communities seek to remain independent. Their relationships, however, determined especially the occupation and exploitation of a common territory, force them to give up this independence, and joining together in the same cult, the sign of their spiritual solidarity, they form a dugu (1).

1. This word is not without ambiguity. On the one hand, it means "that which is below," hence, "the soil"; on the other hand, it means "place," "residence," or "at the home of." It is understood to mean "territory" or "country" occupied by a human collectivity, and by an easily understandable deviation, it likewise designates the organization which governs this collectivity in relation to this territory.

614 The dugu have definite territorial domains, and they,
621 too, prefer to live without the subordination of any one of them
631 to the others. There are relationships between some of them, such as some being offshoots of others and, due to proximity, many matrimonial unions have bound them together.

Unavoidable necessity also often forces the dugu to form leagues, coalitions, or more often associations called kafu' (literally, "union"). Depending on the circumstances, a chief is elected by the association or he usurps the authority over it. This sometimes results in the creation of a political or administrative organization. The Ségala area, also called Sénébala, is an example. "It has a local history of several centuries, hereditary chiefs of several dynasties, social and matrimonial bonds and customary institutions which have persisted for generations; it is a nation and a fatherland" (2).

2. In Marty, Etudes sur l'Islam et les tribus du Soudan [Studies on Islam and the Tribes of the Sudan], Vol. 4, p. 105.

614 It also may happen that someone who becomes a chief
631 will be so enamored with the exercise and the profits of
661 power that with the support of his followers -- relatives or others -- he will manage to retain permanent control. This association is what we here call a clan; the Bambara designate it by the word ton', applicable to any association.

As an organism of authority, this clan may be defined as an oligarchic government founded for the sole purpose of subjugating, by any means, the individuals it can reach for the sake of exploiting them. Those who are enfeoffed to this government are called "the people of So-and-So" or "the people of such and such place" by the Bambara, as by other natives, [289] for example: the Massa-si-u (1),

1. From another point of view, Massa-si-u means "descendants of Massa," and hence, "the tribe of Massa."

614 leading men made use of the cults to realize their ambitious
794 designs and to gratify their personal hatreds. From that point of view it can indeed be said that religion was a means of domination. It would be altogether too simple, however, to say that these cults had no other reason for existence than to maintain terror as the basis of the power of the fama. Any such facile opinion should be discarded, because the facts should be evaluated, not from the outside, but rather in the native milieu. It then certainly appears possible that they are of the same order as the many phenomena already examined.

This powerful religious focus animated the whole clan. Impetus, direction and control belonged to the fama, whose role was conditioned, as we have seen, by the attitudes of the furu-ba dyon' and especially of the ton'-dyon', both of which were represented by the dyon'-kuntigi who were, in a sense, their agents. Was it not inevitable that there should be a kind of spiritual current, supposedly emanating from the idols, which inspired the fama and the furu-ba dyon' and then returned to the idols in the form of a cult? How could such a constant preoccupation with the supernatural not make a deep impression? This preoccupation haunts the natives everywhere and always, [322] and they express it in ways that are in perfect harmony with their world, however ridiculous they may appear to European logic and reason.

614 The Ségou area acquired special importance because of
●621 the presence of the community of the fama, which settled there under remarkable circumstances.

It is usual in any important community for the first-born son to be set apart. Destined to succeed the fa upon his death, he is prepared for his future responsibilities by being given the management of a portion of the joint property. As the fa grows older, the role and the importance of this eldest son increase.

*173 When a community is sufficiently wealthy, a privileged
614 position is likewise given to the eldest sons of the other wives of the fa, because he is always forced to distribute favors equally among his various wives whose jealousy may have far-reaching effects. Upon the death of a fa, many difficulties arise, stemming from his all too obvious preferences. An example of this was the

596 The fa. -- The whole of this family obeys the same head: the fa. The fa is designated by a council of elders when he fulfills the following conditions: first, not to refuse the faya and to be a member of the community, that is, actually to live within the community; next, he must never have been a slave, and he must not have settled abroad without hoping to return home. In addition, he must be a legitimate child, that is to say, born in wedlock, and the firstborn. In principle, the faya passes from older to younger brother (in the classificatory sense of the term). Thus, the fa is always the member of each generation closest to the ancestor. Finally, the fa must be able, that is, healthy, active, and a good administrator. Often the fa designates his successor before his death. The successor may assume power only 40 days after the death of the last fa, and after being recognized as head of the family by the assembly of elders. From that moment on, he exercises his functions, come what may.

[587] [848]

The fa has charge of, and the moral and physical responsibility for, the whole community. He directs and protects all the members of the family. These latter can escape his authority only by leaving the village for good; they are then considered to be dead members. (The descendants of the fa by his daughters are outside of the community; they belong to the patriarchal communities of their respective fathers.)

The fa, head of the family, lives under the administrative dependence of the head of the village.

2. From Family to Community

● 621 The true social unit is the community. Ties of kinship and marriage unite groups without racial or ethnic unity.

622 a. Patriarchal Organization of the "Ton." -- All the family heads obey a village head: it is on him that the responsibility falls for the organization of the community territory, as well as the responsibility for administering justice when contention arises between followers of different faya. The village chief is generally master of the land: dugu-kolo-tigi; sometimes [54] he cedes his rights to a village administrative chief younger than himself, but in matters of religion he remains all-powerful, and each year he receives gifts from the different family heads for the needs of the common cult. He also

622 gives the orders concerning local celebrations and initiations.

In fact, the land originally belongs to spirits, and the chief 622 who succeeds the founder of the village is the only one who is able 776 to establish contact with the chief of the spirits and negotiate with him. He is the earthly administrator of the spirit; he assures his worship, the exploitation of the land, and the organization of the community territory.

● 621 The first chief of the land was the first occupant; the suc- 622 ceeding chiefs are his heirs, following the order of succession. To found a new village, a chief chooses a place in unoccupied territory, usually at a crossroads, near a water source, near a baobab, [778 a doubalé, or other sacred tree. He offers sacrifices to the spirits 824] and receives in exchange their authorization to settle. If his group prospers, and less fortunate families want to establish themselves in this well-favored location, they ask the chief for authorization. However, as Monteil (1) remarks: "... The fa of a familial com-

1. Monteil, Les Bambara du Ségou et du Kaarta [The Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta].

munity depends strictly on the patriarchy only if, attached to it by the male line, he holds some goods of the patriarchy or if he claims rights in this patriarchy. In the contrary case, the family fa conducts himself as a stranger in relation to the patriarchy, which can only treat him in like fashion ..." Every familial community becomes patriarchal at the death of the family head when he has no heirs (see the chapter on inheritance); the community then groups around itself familial communities which themselves include paternally related groups and maternally related groups. When the patriarchy is an old one, a considerable number of persons live under its aegis. All recognize dyamu and taboos (see below) in common.

621 When the settlement becomes too populous, a fa gathers a 631 group and founds another village. Afterwards, the people of neighboring districts may solicit the patronage of the first village, by participating in its djo (2) and by sacrificing to its guardian spirits.

2. See the chapter on religion.

621 631 The cluster of all these villages forms a kafo or kafu (canton) which includes the original family, its oldest neighbors, the inhabitants of other villages, and, finally, the outsiders. All these people acknowledge common interests, and the villages of the same canton send representatives to the assembly which meets at the chief's residence. Thus, the large family grows into a patriarchy to form the dugu (village) and spreads out into a kafu. Sometimes, after these branchings out, certain offshoot communities adopt a special dyamu and other taboos. The new dyamu is joined to the old, and little by little supplants it. The principal characteristics of the mother community exist, to which are added [55] various new traits, but the relationship between the two communities is never extinguished. Inversely, natives even of different races but having the same dyamu consider themselves related, which for them implies respect for the ancestral traditions concerning the cult, the practice of mutual aid, respect for the authority of the fa, who must protect all his relatives no matter how remote the connection, and fidelity to all pacts between the communities. Finally, between individuals of different races, certain dyamu, although dissimilar, are considered equivalent and may be interchanged.

621 b. Alliances. -- The unity of a community is founded not only upon common interests, which we will examine later, but also upon a whole system of alliances.

Monteil distinguishs four types of alliance: the common cult (see the chapter on religion), marriage, the tné, and the oath.

621 581 583 Marriage: this is the most common form of alliance. When a Bambara seeks an alliance with a family, he gives his daughter in marriage to one of the members of that family, after providing her with a large dowry. Some interesting information on this subject is furnished us by Monteil (1). The alliance between two families

1. Monteil, Les Bambara du Ségou et du Kaarta. Les Empires du Mali [The Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta. The Mali Empires.]

is reinforced still further when they establish the custom of exchanging women. In this way the Soninké family Niakaté allied itself to the

621
581 Koulibali of Ségou, founded Bamako, and changed its name to Niaré
583 in becoming Bambara.

The tné: the taboo concerning an animal or some object.
621 The basis of this alliance is the oath of the fa not to kill or eat the
784 object of the taboo. All the generations following this ancestor must respect the taboo ad infinitum.

Thus, the Kéita have the hippopotamus for tné; the Traoré, the Dambélé, and the Warata have the panther; the Samaké, the elephant; the Koubilali of Ségou, the hippopotamus; those of Issa Ber, the m'polio [a fish]; others have the mole cricket (n'gere) and the striped mouse (n'kelika); the Niaré, Sisé, Silla, Doukouré, and the Daramé, the python, etc.

The oath: this seals a pact of dyonge fraternization. Each
621 party to the contract extracts some drops of blood from his forearm
608 which is mixed with goat's milk. Swearing by his ancestors, he states the conditions of the alliance and drinks part of the beverage. This alliance binds the parties to it and all their descendants ad
[582] infinitum. It entails a prohibition or, contrariwise, a recommendation of marriage between members of the two communities, and establishes solidarity between the two communities which owe each other mutual assistance. In the framework of this alliance is the cathartic alliance termed sénankuya, which, besides the preceding obligations, governs the system of purifications.

The sénankuya: unites certain specific groups bearing differ-
621 names within the same village, but can also have an intertribal
608 character; ex.: Mandingue-Peul. Humblot observed the following
648 alliances at Kankan: Kéita-Fofana; Kondé-Traoré; Kéita-Béreté-Sérigou-Sissé; [56] Kala-Kéita-Kouyaté; Kourouma-Koma; Kourouma-Dabo; Kourouba-Konaté-Kamara-Bagayoko; Konaté-Dougoumoko; Konaté-Sidibé. This system of alliance in which
[783] the two allies are equal and complementary governs the mechanism of the purifications, notably by the insult, and the duties of reciprocal assistance (1). Formerly, when a sénanku was reduced to slavery,

1. M. Griaule, "L'alliance cathartique" [The Cathartic Alliance], Africa, Vol. XVIII, 1948.

608 his ally had to try to ransom him. A sénanku often serves as inter-
621 mediary in arranging marriages, in land claims, in the collection of
648 debts. He is rewarded by gifts. He has the power to stop quarrels and to oppose acts of rage and violence by the man whose sénanku he is, no matter what his rank and no matter how important the decisions in question are. The sénanku of a Fama could prevent his declaring war or condemning to death one of his subjects. Moreover, he has certain limited privileges over his ally's possessions. (He may appropriate unimportant objects, food, and even sums of money.) Finally, he recruits the labor force which his ally may need.

c. Age Classes. -- But though these different ties exercise an
621 important influence on the political, social, and religious life of the
571 community they are generally too broad and too lax to permit organiza-
561 tion of a work community. In fact, we have seen how a large village may be formed of different communities relatively independent of each other, despite the authority of the founding community's fa. On the level of the canton, the geographical dispersion does not permit the Fama to intervene personally in the organization of the work community. The latter is founded essentially on the system of relations of the age classes.

561 From infancy until circumcision for the boys, until excision for the girls, the young Bambara belongs to a hierarchic society which prepares him or her for this ceremony and which provides an education complementary to that received in the family. Within this association all the children are divided into age classes: boys up to six years of age are bilakoro-dogomani (bila = short pants), from 6 to 10 years they are bilakoro-dogoma, from 10 to about 15 years, bilakoro-koroba. Similarly, the girls are, successively: sunkiri-dogomani, sunkuru-dogoma, and sunkuru-koroba. Each age class has a chief: ton-tigi for the boys, musso-tigi for the girls; each office is doubled by a deputy (syere). There is also a treasurer and a ton-dyeli who is the griot of the ton. All are elected by members of the society. A Bambara will be influenced all his life by his membership in a certain age class which groups all the children who underwent circumcision at the same time. In fact, up to the moment of circumcision the child's personality is not yet distinct. We have seen before how small children were

567 701 3. The ton-koro-bolo behind the disi is a special reserve formed entirely of pure ton-dyon.

4. The keli-tigi was the chief of the expedition, designated by the Fama. He might be a dyon-kuntigi (chief of the furuba-dyon), a member of the Fama's community, or the Fama himself.

708 534 Finally, the army was accompanied by a musical corps, composed essentially of drums which transmitted messages. There were armpit drums (dunkan'), shoulder drums (taura), three-legged drums (dange), drums carried by two men (tabala), and coupled drums (denuba). Often horns (buru) were added, sometimes small horns made of ivory or horn, and sometimes xylophones (bada) and cowbells.

708 537 A dyeli (griot) follows the expedition to observe the exploits that he must retransmit; he must encourage the warriors and dispel panic by the power of his oratory.

B. Influence of Social Organization on Economic Life

a. The ton, Work Community

621 We have seen that the social unit among the Bambara is the community. The community is also the work unit and the economic unit. The independent individual is not conceived of. The community owns all the wealth which makes up the spiritual and material patrimony: the land, the agricultural, industrial, and commercial products, the habitations ...

423 621 622 609 [431] The community regulates the exploitation of the land. The dugu-tigi is the first occupant, master of the land, of which he distributes the lots to the different family heads. When a stranger, a family head, wants to enter into a community, he chooses an unoccupied field and asks the village chief for it. The request is accompanied by ten kola nuts and a chicken. Authorization cannot then be refused. The chief of the land sacrifices the chicken before the entire community and informs it of the installation of the newcomer. When the stranger wants to leave the land, he is given back his chicken and kola nuts.

423 621 622 Land assigned to a family head may always be taken back from him without justification by the dugu-tigi and his council.

423 Thus, the man holding the land can neither sell it nor take any ac-
●621 tion regarding it which would involve the interests of the whole com-
622 munity; but he can rent it out, pledge it, or [62] cede it, which leads to manifold disputes at the time of redistribution of the land in the case of cyclical cultures.

621 The dugu-tigi also prepares the community's budget. The
622 resources include: gifts made to the gods, thanksgiving offerings
652 for the hunt, for the fishing catch, and for the millet harvest, payments for concession of land or for services rendered, rent of community goods (fixed revenues or exceptional tribute), receipts from fines, confiscations, escheatage, and finally, the extraordinary aid formerly obtained for war, constructions, etc.

Among the expenditures are included the cost of supporting
[65] members of the community if need be, of maintaining the proper
746] appearance, assistance to the sick, and, especially, the tax or tribute formerly paid to the sovereign, legitimate or not, and today paid to the French administration.

596 The family patrimony (tien) is administered by the fa, head of the family. A. Aubert (1) gives us the composition of this

1. A. Aubert, Coutume bambara (cercle de Bougouni) [Bambara Custom (Bougouni Circle)].

patrimony which includes: "Rights on the lands cultivated by the community; animals; serfs; money owed and money owing; the dowries of the daughters and women who are issue of members of the settlement; the inheritances; the dwellings of the settlement and their furnishings; the foodstuffs of the communal granaries (foro-ba), and, in general, all wealth resulting from the communal work of the family members."

Moreover, the fa must: "see to the material life of all the members of the family; provide dowries for the women of the community; pay back the dowries of the women of the community who are to be divorced; ransom members of the family who are taken prisoner or are sold, and pay taxes in goods or in money."

b. Organization of Work

241
621 Work on the land is the only kind of work suitable for free men, for to work the land is to purify it. All agricultural operations
[622 are set in motion by the dugu-tigi and are regulated by the fa who
591 assigns tasks by age classes. Each member of the community must work for it every day, except Monday and Thursday, from dawn to about 4:30 p.m. He may be helped, or even replaced, by his children and his captives. The rest of the time he may work for himself in his personal field or in the little fields situated along the water courses and the rivers, which are not periodically redistributed and are considered almost as personal and hereditary property. The fruit of this labor constitutes the personal savings of the community member.

316 The exploitation of the subsoil is governed by other rules
423 which we still know only imperfectly. Like the soil, the subsoil be-
[326] longs to the master of the land. Iron ore was extracted solely by the blacksmith who paid the master of the land a rent in the form of hoes or axes. To exploit the gold mines, thousands of natives went in family groups to the placers at the beginning of the dry season. [63] The location of the placers was determined by the priests and changed every year. The men dig multiple small holes very close to each other, which may go very deep depending on the depth of the barren layer. When the calabashes of gold-bearing earth are brought up, the women wash the earth. The placers are abandoned at the beginning of the rains after three or four months of exploitation. Before the French occupation, gold was the exclusive property of the Fama and could in no case be the object of commerce. To-
[439] day, gold is generally sold at the placers to Syrian, native, or European merchants, who have established veritable shops at the mining centers, shops which contain everything necessary for the miner's life.

463 The exercise of a profession other than the cultivation of the
554 land is reserved to artisans who are accorded the insulting name of nyaman-kala, for only work on the land is noble work. These artisans form separate families in every Sudanese society, which has caused Europeans to call them, improperly, people of caste. They are divided into independent guilds.

845 778 431 If one of the twins dies early in life, as usually happens, the survivor receives a statuette which he keeps all his life with jealous care and to which he gives the name of the deceased. He dresses it to the best of his ability, often covers it with glass trinkets, such as bangles, beads, bits of amber, rings, etc., and well-bred people never give him a gift without adding at least 5 cowrie shells for the statuette.

845 778 825 The sinsin also grants twins a curious privilege. A scorpion not only cannot bite them, it is even at their service, and on their order will bite a fellow who has displeased them.

845 778

A twins' doll.

845 551 It is easy to recognize twins (flani in Bambara) as they have special names, the commonest being Sinna, Maféné, Gno, and Ouassa. /99/

10. The Genie Protector of Villages

776 621 The genie protector of a village lives on a knoll or a rock; almost always, if not invariably, its home is a baobab or false cedar near the walls, in a little grove intersected by neat paths, well kept and often raked.

Such a spirit is the exclusive property of one family, and even bears its name, or diamou. Its sacrificer, called gnéna-n-sonnaba, also bears the name of dougoutigi (1); he is, in fact, the real head of

1. Gnena, "fetish," "genie"; sonnaba, "great sacrificer"; dougou, "village"; tigi, "head," "master."

Typical Bambara headman.

the village. Although at present the civil and religious authorities are separate in many places, the gnéna-n-sonnaba, or religious priest, always holds precedence, and self-respecting people call him dougoutigi (head of the village), giving the title of sotigi (2) to the

2. So, "hut," "house"; tigi, "head."

one who has only civil authority. Here we have further evidence that the organization of the Bambara nation was, at its origin purely religious. The separation of the two authorities in certain hamlets can easily be understood.

Under the Bambara dynasty the kingdom of Ségou was divided into provinces, cantons, and villages. The king, Fama or Massa

631 ("great sorcerer who has communication with the invisible beings"), lived at Ségou with his court. At the head of each of his provinces he had a minister responsible for levying the tax (/this man was/ his tool, often one of his children, to whom -- doubtless for this reason -- was given the title of Fama, petty king. The minister did his work through the intermediary of the heads of cantons, or kafotigi, under who, with respect to civil matters, were all the heads of villages, the gnéna-n-sonnaba, or dougoutigi. /100/

The levying of the tax often gave rise to disputes between the kafotigi and the dougoutigi, and the latter would resign from his functions or be relieved of them. After that he lost all civil powers but none of his religious or priestly authority, and since the religious sphere had precedence over the civil, he kept his title of dougoutigi in his role as gnéna-n-sonnaba. The one who replaced him /in the civil sphere/ was never anything but an upstart and worthy only of the name sotigi ("head of houses"), although his responsibility became hereditary.

798 Under Moslem domination the worship of the gnéna, or djiné,
793 was forbidden and punished by very severe penalties (slavery or death).
621 It can thus be believed that it was to the advantage of the gnena-n-sonnaba to keep their position quiet, to refuse the title of dougoutigi, and even to forbid their people to bestow it on them. In Bani country and among the Bambara of Sikasso and Koutiala, where Moslem domination was never solidly established, there was no cause for similar fears, and it is understandable that the custom of calling the religious head dougoutigi and the civil head sotigi has been retained.

621 The gnéna-n-sonnaba, or dougoutigi, is helped in his duties
793 by a siéré (aide, deputy); the heads of quarters (sotigi) and the heads of families (gouatigi) make up his council. Nothing important is done in the village without consulting its head, who calls all his elders together and decides nothing without them. All of them are also present at any sacrifice if it is offered by a family, and it is not unusual to see them going single file, evening or morning, to the sacred grove of the fetish. On the morning of a marriage, they always go there.

The fetish protects the village by causing the evil spells and sorcery cast on it to misfire. It defends the village against wicked people and against its enemies, and thanks to it the inhabitants can peacefully devote themselves to their work in the fields. While averting plagues and diseases which decimate the population, it gives strength, health, and vigor to all, and finally it populates the village by making the women fertile. Above all, it is the source of unity among families for it brings them all together under the authority of a single head; the friends of the head of the family whose name, or diamou, it bears, are its friends, and his enemies are also its own. To fail the priest, the gnéna-n-sonnaba, the dougoutigi, is to fail the fetish, so close and intimate is the union between the two.

11. The Koté, or Koré, Genie

Since it is the fundamental basis of power and authority, the worship of the dasiri can, with some justice, be regarded as the first and oldest of all Bambara religious practices. That of the koté, or koré, likewise seems to me quite respectable from this standpoint and just as old. As a matter of fact, this spirit, like the dasiri, lives in a little grove near the village, and the three trees it likes to inhabit are the baobab, the false cedar, and the nettle tree.

The worship of the koré is especially popular in Bani country. Today not all the villages have the fetish, but all have at /103/ least a few initiates belonging to this semioccult sect. The sect includes women among its members; it is divided into eight groups, each ruled by its oldest member, who in turn is under the authority of the koretigi, the supreme head of the association.

At the time of the annual sacrifices, and especially at the sacrifices made every seven years on the days of admission (for it is necessary to be a koré dé (1) in order to participate in the secret part

1. Koré, the fetish bearing this name; dé, "son."

845
778 old men and important people of the village, as well as friends, are
852 invited to squat before the jugs and partake of the liquid refreshment.

The Dasiri Fetish, Protector of Villages

776 The dasiri is the chief of all the gnena, or djine. In order that
621 its worship may be better understood and that the reader may have an idea of the power of its priest, I must go into a few details which cannot help but throw some light on Bambara organization. Let us, for example, take a village that is being founded: we are present at the election of the priest of the dasiri, the gnéna-n-sonnaba; at the choice of the fetish tree and of the sacred animal, the genie's mount; at the enthroning of the sacrificer; and finally at the sacrifices.

Election of the priest

776 The population has grown, the surrounding land is exhausted,
621 and a group of families must move out. The old men who are still
793 lively and the youths full of strength and life take up their arms and
[482] fasten a dirty goatskin, a foroko of provisions, on their shoulders and scatter in the bush in search of less ungrateful soil. When they have found it they go back to their homes, and the council of family heads meets to choose a leader. This leader is really a priest, for his chief function is to sacrifice in a public and formal manner to the blonda ba sou (1), the shades of the great entry hut /116/, that is, to leaders

1. Blon, "entry hut"; da, "door, " "doorsill"; ba, "great"; sou, "corpses, " "shades. "

and priests who, just like him, held the reins of power, and to the gnéna, genii, spirits, and fetishes, whence come his names of gnéna-n-sonna ("he who sacrifices to the gnéna fetishes") and gnéna-n-sonnaba ("great sacrificer of the gnéna fetishes"). He alone has the authority to sacrifice to all /these spirits/ in the name of all /the people/.

621 793 555 The palavers and deliberations are long, but the choice is a happy one; the old man chosen as gnéna-n-sonnaba always has the slyness and guile characteristic of the Bambara type. Patient and likeable, he will know how to be just and impartial in disputes, diplomatic and sufficiently master of himself to say only what he intends to. He will know how to acquire the reputation of an upright man who does not know theft or falsehood.

621 793 Elected for life to hold both civil and religious power, he is truly the head of the village, the dougoutigi. His position is hereditary; it passes from brother to brother and, when there are none, goes by right to his oldest son. The one who is to succeed him becomes his aide (siéré), and the heads of families (gouatigi-ou) compose his council; they are always summoned when a question is to be handled or a decision made.

The Choice of the dasiri fetish and its sacred mount

776 778 787 The new village has a head, his aide, and its council; it is organized. Now they must find out the whereabouts of the spring, rock, or tree where lives the protecting spirit, the dougou dasiri (1),

1. Dougou dasiri: /dougou/, "village"; da, "mouth," "entrance"; siri, "bind."

who fastens the entrance to the village and watches over it. For this knowledge the people appeal to a sorcerer; he has intimate contact with the spirits, knows their ways and customs, and understands their language.

There are many sorcerers, and they do not all work in the same way. One discovers his oracles in the entrails of a hen, a second traces cabalistic signs on ashes, a third endlessly moves little stones, bones, and cowrie shells, counting them again and again. To locate the dasiri, people have recourse to the flélikéla (2) diviner, who

2. Flélikéla, "to look attentively, curiously."

776 works with a gourd three quarters full of water.

778 When he has received his honorarium of 40 cowrie shells, which
781 he takes in both hands, he places beside him in the dust his little /117/ gift, consisting of two kola nuts, a few hens, or better, a small billy goat. He asks about the place chosen for the new village and has it described to him down to the smallest detail. Then he takes down a dirty n'go (1) on which he places a gourd which he tips slowly right

1. A ring made of braided roots
bound with cotton thread, which
is covered with a thick layer of blood.

and left, forward and backward, to give it a firm position on its stand. Having done this, he sums up for the spirits the conversation which he has had, and then, with eyes afire and holding his breath, he gives the gourd three flicks with the middle finger of his right hand. They say that a soft murmur, a murmur which is none other than the voices of the genii, is noticed by all present. They hear without understanding, but the sorcerer knows these voices and when he rises it is with a tone of authority that he names the dasiri and the animal which will be its mount.

In the province of Ségou the dasiri is a tree; the tamarind, the false cedar, and the baobab are the preferred trees. The sacred mount, also called dasiri, is a snake, an iguana, a rat, a donkey, etc., but most frequently it is a billy goat.

778 Enthronement of the gnéna-n-sonnaba, priest of the dasiri and
●621 dougoutigi, head of the village

Our Blacks establish the new village and build their huts. Near the fetish tree each family sets up its mortars for grinding sorghum, places its hearths, and installs its kitchens. Bows, guns, and farming implements are hung on the branches of the dasiri, and while the work of settling continues, meals are eaten and dances held in its shade, and in the evening when the moon is shining it is near the tree that they finally stretch out to sleep.

793 The gnéna-n-sonnaba, the dougoutigi, assumes office from the
782 first day and offers a sacrifice in the name of his people. On the trunk
● 62 of the tree, about a meter from the ground, he pours d'lo, or millet
798 beer, and dégé, or /millet/ flour mixed with water, and causes a flow of blood from hens, roosters, goats, and sometimes from a young bull. After this general sacrifice, individual ones follow, for, in order to /118/ place himself under the protection of the genie, each family head in order of seniority offers it a little dégé and a little blood, through the intermediary of his leader, the priest. And on the trunk of the tree there is nothing but great blood stains with feathers, hairs, and shreds of skin stuck in their midst with the remains of chewed kola nuts. Then come the dances, and men, women, and children go into a frenzy at the sound of drums; and the tumult is indescribable.

Sacrifices offered to the dasiri

778 A path a meter wide leads from the village to the fetish tree
782 which is always located in the middle of a small grove if possible.
796 Heads of families sacrifice to it several times a year -- on the morning after the konio, or first night of marriage, for example, but the festival in which the whole village takes part is annual. The ceremony has greater importance every second year, and every seventh year it degenerates into an orgy.

During the sacrifice the women stay at the edge of the sacred grove, and only the men and boys go inside and surround the fetish. After an offering of dégé and a little d'lo, the throat of a sheep or goat is cut in the name of the whole village, and the head of each family, comes with hens, sheep, goats, etc., according to the family's means and the number of members; the meat piles up. The hens are plucked on the spot, the large pieces are cut up, and the women carry it all back to the village. Each family head is given a piece as big as a fist from the first sacrifice offered in the name of all, and this, too, is
[252] taken back to the village; the rest is roasted and then grilled on the spot and eaten by the men, without salt, pepper, or any kind of seasoning. The dégé and d'lo of the main sacrifice are drunk under

881 until they are completely healed; for it is not until evening, when the setting sun reddens the horizon and takes on its bloody hue that they re-enter the village. From this day on they wear a costume (all [292] yellow if they are Bambara) of trousers, a blouse, and on their heads a kind of handkerchief tied under the chin (4). They pass the time in

4. In some villages, instead of the yellow handkerchief the circumcised have a cap with two points. In Bani country the circumcised wear the blouse and handkerchief, or cap, and nothing more.

making mats, singing, striking together gourd disks strung on a stick, and especially in eating, "for they are being stuffed," and in sleeping. /181/

881 But in speaking of the boys, I forgot the little girls! They undress under the tree nearest to the sacred karité. Naked as a worm, 304 each one when her turn comes runs at top speed with her abdomen to the ground and throws herself into the arms of a woman, also of the blacksmith caste, who immediately cuts her. On a braided platter, [285 made of fine, pliable grass, the mother or her substitute receives the 415 bloody fragment which will be a grigri, a talisman or good-luck 789] charm for the house, and while the gunpowder speaks, the disabled girl, pretending not to be suffering at all from the loss of her clitoris, goes back to her place, and another replaces her.

881 The session ends with the last girl, and the crowd breaks out in a song of joy and triumph. The mother, the eldest sister, or a [482] serving woman wraps the excised girl in a big white cloth and carries her astride her back to the village to the hut which has been prepared for her (1). This carrying, so laughable in itself (they can walk, even

1. Each village is divided into quarters. The excised girls of each quarter have their hut in that quarter.

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